

# Mr. Bugs Dog Bite Prevention Program



This educational program has been made possible through the generous support of Larry and Patricia Rodriguez in memory of Mr. Bugs, their wonderful, feisty fox terrier who gave them years of joy, love and companionship — and chose his friends carefully.

On behalf of the many people and dogs who will benefit from this program, the Hawaiian Humane Society extends its thanks to Larry and Patricia Rodriguez for their commitment to helping Hawaii's animals and people.

This program was originally designed for people whose job brings them to unfamiliar homes. The information can be applied to many circumstances. We know you will be better protected from dog bites after reviewing these pages. If you have a group or business that would like to schedule a dog bite prevention workshop, call the Hawaiian Humane Society at 946-2187, ext. 222.

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## Introduction

It is no wonder that dogs are the most popular pet in America. They are wonderful companions and playmates, and offer comfort, unconditional love and joy to their owners and caretakers. They join in on the daily activities of life at home, and grow to be important members of the family.

This program was developed to help people and dogs live harmoniously together in the community. You will learn a few preventative measures to help you avoid unexpected confrontations with dogs. The program will also help you understand dog behavior and show you how to respond safely to an unfamiliar dog.

Considering that approximately 37% of Oahu households own at least one dog, this information could prove to be valuable to you, your family members, co-workers, and the entire community in the encounters with dogs we are all certain to have in our lifetime.

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## Preventing Surprises

When approaching an unfamiliar house, your best defense is to be prepared. Identify whether a dog is present before you attempt to approach an unfamiliar property. If possible, remain in your vehicle – your safe harbor – and take the following steps:

### **Be aware of dogs that may be loose nearby in the neighborhood:**

- Someone may be walking their dog nearby or have allowed their pet out of the yard. Always politely ask an owner to restrain their dog and not allow the dog to jump on you. Remain in your vehicle if you see a loose dog in the area.

### **Evaluate the property for signs of a dog:**

- Look for food bowls, feces, dog house, chain, or a path worn in the grass.
- Before entering, try to draw a dog out by whistling or calling for the dog, honk your car horn, or jingle your car keys.

### **If you discover there is a dog on the property, assess if the dog is safely secured:**

- The fence is of adequate height and strength.
- The fence has no holes underneath or on the side.
- The chain, rope, or leash is strong and short enough for you to pass.
- The windows and doors are secure, if the dog is inside the house.

### **Always have something in your hand to protect yourself if a dog surprises you or charges. This item could be:**

- A soft briefcase, purse, satchel, jacket, or towel.
- Something soft and easily compressed, not hard.

### **If the dog is not secured...**

*Do not enter the property.*

- Politely ask the owner to secure the dog in another area, or to place the dog on a leash.
- If the owner says, "she won't bite," and does not secure the dog, politely tell the owner that you will not enter the property until the dog is secured.
- If the owner refuses to secure the dog after your requests, arrange to return another time.

### **If no dog is present outside the house, after knocking at the door...**

- Step back from the porch or doorway.
- Provide yourself with room to exit if a dog darts out, keeping your briefcase (or protective item) at waist level.

### **In certain situations, any dog may react aggressively.**

*This is because dogs are naturally protective of their territory and their owners. Therefore, always use caution and do not approach an unfamiliar dog in these situations:*

- A dog on its own property
- A dog with the owner
- A dog with a child
- A confined or chained dog
- A dog eating, playing, or chewing a toy

### **Trust your instincts and be on the defensive when approaching any unfamiliar household.**

- Do not assume the dog is harmless, as the animal's behavior may change as you get closer to the door or the owner.

**An unneutered male dog that is confined or chained most of the time is the most likely type of dog to bite when approached.**

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## **Understanding Behavior**

A dog's reaction to you depends much more on the dog's training, environment, and the particular situation you are in, than on the animal's size or breed. A small dog with soulful eyes and droopy ears may be just as likely to react aggressively as a large, powerful one. Approach all dogs with caution and respect.

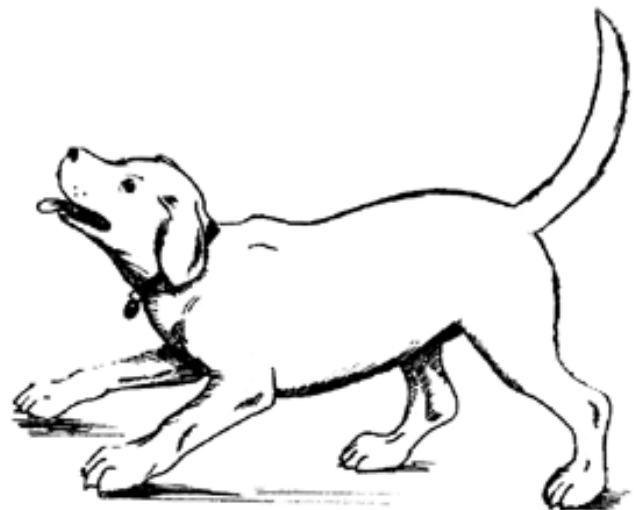
### **The first step to ensure your safety is to recognize the dog's behavior and then respond appropriately.**

*By looking at the dog's body language, such as the eyes, tail, stance and the position of the ears, we can identify the behavior the dog is displaying.*

### **There are four main types of dog behavior:**

- Play
- Submissive/Fear
- Aggressive
- Prey drive

Millions of years ago, dogs lived in packs, and worked together to protect and care for the members of their group. Dogs of well-led packs were often the ones who survived to breed, and passed on this important instinct to the generations of dogs that followed. It is this unique "pack instinct" that makes dogs protective and loyal to their owners whom they view as the leader of their "pack."



## **Play Behavior**

### **Body language**

- Ears, body and front paws will be in a down position

PLAY

- May romp back and forth, pick up and run with a toy, or bring the toy to you
- May bark and wag tail

**Most common type of dog displaying this behavior:**

- A socialized, playful dog of any breed, familiar with humans.

**Potential to bite:**

- Low, but may jump up, bark and run around.

**Submissive/Fear Behavior**

**Body language**

- Head is down, the ears are back, body may be shaking
- Looks away and avoids eye contact
- Tail is tucked under its body and the dog may assume a crouched position
- When approached, will try to get away or behind you
- If cornered, may use a high barking sound or run frantically back and forth snapping at you



SUBMISSIVE

**Most common type of dog displaying this behavior:**

- Dogs which were not socialized as puppies or have little human contact
- Dogs that have suffered abuse
- Shy dogs that are afraid of loud noises or a strange environment

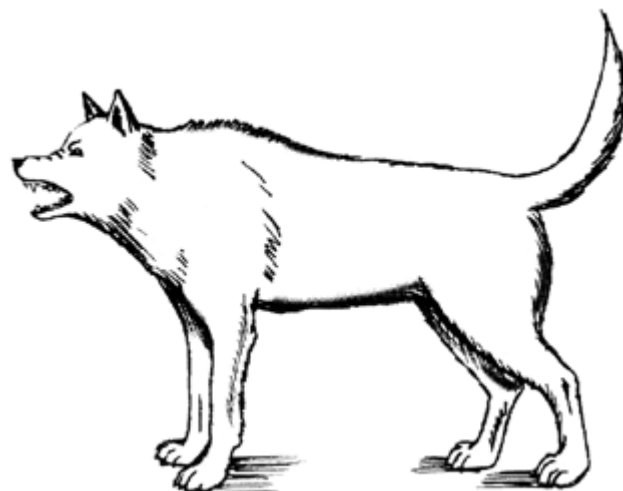
**Potential to bite:**

- High if cornered, low if left alone

**Aggressive Behavior**

**Body language**

- Head is up, ears are erect, lips puckered or lifted, and the body is tense
- Stares with direct eye contact
- Tail is up and wagging
- Hair may stand up on back
- When approached, stiffens and may make steps towards you and growl or snarl



AGGRESSIVE

**Most common type of dog displaying this behavior:**

- Guard-type dogs, trained specifically for protection
- Unneutered male dogs, chained or kept in an enclosure with minimal socialization
- Dominant-type dogs who may fight with other dogs and be difficult to train

**Potential to bite:**

- High in all situations.

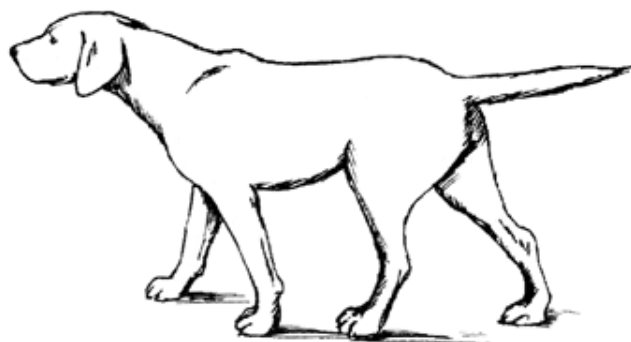
**Prey Drive Behavior**

**Body language**

- Displays no threatening signals such as growling or hair up on back
- Follows with its eyes and stares
- Lowers its body and stalks with slow wagging tail
- Will often target and chase a moving object such as a bicyclist, jogger, or car

**Most common type of dog displaying this behavior:**

- Dogs which are kept in a fenced or enclosed area and allowed constant visual contact with passersby
- Hunting-type dogs which are trained to track or retrieve
- Assertive dogs which may be possessive of food, toys and family

**Potential to bite:**

- High if threatened or when in pursuit of moving object.

**PREY DRIVE**

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In summary, dogs may show a variety of behavior, but play, submissive/fear, aggressive and prey drive behaviors are the four most easily recognized and understood. When you see a dog, look at the body language and identify the behavior. Learning how to respond to this behavior will help prevent being bitten.

Dogs are social animals and need constant contact with people. Through play, training, and other interaction, they integrate themselves into the family's routines and habits. A dog that has limited contact with people may become fearful because it is unsure of its place. Dogs that are kept outdoor, with little human contact, are more likely to react aggressively when approached.

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**Responding Safely**

There is always a chance that, without warning, you could be approached by an unfamiliar and unfriendly dog. In this situation, the first and most important thing to remember is to:

**STOP****Do not run or shout...**

Then take a moment to compose yourself and read the dog's body language.

If the dog is showing:

**Submissive/Fear Behavior:**

*(crouched with tail tucked under its body)*

- Do not corner or attempt to touch the dog
- Stay calm and avoid sudden movements
- Since this type of dog feels trapped, let the dog move away from you
- Speak softly and slowly back away, turning so that your side faces the dog, allowing the dog to get to a safe retreat (house, porch, etc.)

**Aggressive Behavior:**

*(stiff body, hair standing up on back)*

- Stand stiff, keeping your hands and arms close to your body. **DO NOT STARE AT THE DOG**
- Slowly turn so that your side faces the dog and slowly walk away. **DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK**
- Quietly talk to the dog
- Keep your soft briefcase at waist level on your side between you and the dog
- Walk to your car or the nearest barrier, maintaining a side posture toward the dog
- Stop if the dog takes a step towards you, settle, and then slowly start to retreat again

**Prey Drive Behavior:**

*(chasing you or following you closely with its eyes)*

- Stop all movement immediately
- Do not ignore the dog
- Tell the dog "No," "Go Home," "Sit," or "Stay"
- Try tossing the dog an object to fetch in an effort to distract it

- Put a barrier (bicycle, surfboard, etc.) between you and the dog
- Assume the side posture and slowly back away from the dog to safety

Smell is a dog's most important sense. Their noses help them scent food, territory odors, and even emotional states in other animals. This reliance on smell is why, when being introduced to an unfamiliar dog, you should always offer the back of your hand for the dog to sniff before petting or stroking the animal.

**If you are suddenly confronted by a dog and:**

**The dog jumps at you and attempts to bite:**

- Stop and present the soft object for the dog to grab
- Shake and pull the object while the dog is grabbing it and slowly back away to safety
- Once you near your vehicle, let the dog have the object as you retreat to your vehicle

**You have no object to distract the dog, and the dog bites or jumps on you:**

- Stand quietly... do not kick or attempt to hit the dog
- Place your hands in fists around your head and neck for protection
- Slowly, with your side facing the dog, walk to safety

**You are knocked down by the dog:**

- Lie quietly in a fetal position
- Place your hands in fists around your head and neck for protection
- Remain in this defensive posture until the dog goes away or you are rescued

**You are chased while jogging or bicycling:**

- Stop all movement. Do not run or shout
- If on a bicycle, dismount and put the bike between you and the dog
- Assume the side posture and slowly back away from the dog to safety

**You are bitten by a dog:**

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water. A visit or call to your doctor is also recommended.
- Report the incident to the Hawaiian Humane Society at 946-2187, ext. 280. Give as much information as possible about the dog — its size, sex, color, age, features, where you saw the dog, whether you've seen the dog before, and so on — so that we may counsel the owner and help prevent others from being bitten. For your safety and the safety of the neighborhood, please report the dog bite incident.
- If you see a loose dog, or are aware of a situation where the owner is irresponsible for the care and control of a dog, call the Hawaiian Humane Society at 946-2187, ext. 280 to report the problem.



Mr. Bugs says:

Dogs are important members of our families and community. We provide hours of unconditional love and comfort. I hope my dog bite prevention program has given you a better understanding of behavior so all the dogs and people in our community can live harmoniously together.